

The Essentials of Our Faith – Studies In I John #1

Understanding The Issues

I. Background Issues

A. John the Apostle

- Disciples of Jesus
- Gospel of John – Book of Revelation
- Overseer of Churches of Asia Minor
- Knew the issues that were going on
- Wrote like a Pastor – out of concern, to give comfort, direction, warnings and correction
- He knew these people and loved them

B. The situation

- Many of his readers were second or third generation believers – some of the excitement of their faith had faded – “You have lost your first love.”
- They didn’t want to be holy – different from the world around them
- No persecution but the dangers came from within the church
- A desire to connect Christianity with the ideas and philosophy current of the time, i.e., spirit is good – flesh is evil
- Denial of Jesus as Messiah – he hasn’t come back and Jerusalem is gone
- Denial of the Incarnation
 1. God in the flesh – crazy
 2. Physical body of Jesus
- Led to ideas about how we live
 1. Asceticism – control it
 2. Do what you want it doesn’t matter what you do with your body
 3. We have the spirit – we can’t sin any more
 4. So we are better than everyone else
- This led to many false believers leaving the fellowship, shaming the true believers and creating much confusion about what is true.

C. John is writing to confront these ideas as false and re-affirm what is the true faith

- The character of God
- The centrality of Jesus Christ
- Christian discipleship
- Love, unity, and fellowship
- The preservation of sound teaching
- The importance of discernment
- Assurance and confidence

II. Thoughts On Beginning Our Study

- ##### **A. Keep in mind that most false teaching comes from a genuine desire to impact more people with the Gospel**
- To make it more contemporary
 - To make it more acceptable
 - To remove barriers that make it hard for people to accept
 - To accommodate the message to the culture. The problem is that what you end up with is a different gospel that no longer is authentic Christianity
- ##### **B. John is important for us because his letter tells us the truths that can never be changed. John says this is what it means to be a Christian in every age and in every culture. These are the truths you have to believe and live by if you’re going to call yourself a Christian.**
- ##### **C. For us, it is essential to understand that we don’t define the Gospel, the Gospel defines us. The Gospel that was from the beginning – that Jesus demonstrated, that the Apostles preached and the first church believed, this is the Christian Gospel.**
- ##### **D. In our study we will discover what these truths are that we surrender to as believers. A lot of things believers do are optional (as the Lord leads) but there are a few that aren't**
- ##### **E. The problem of surrender in our world and the power of the gospel that transforms us by faith.**